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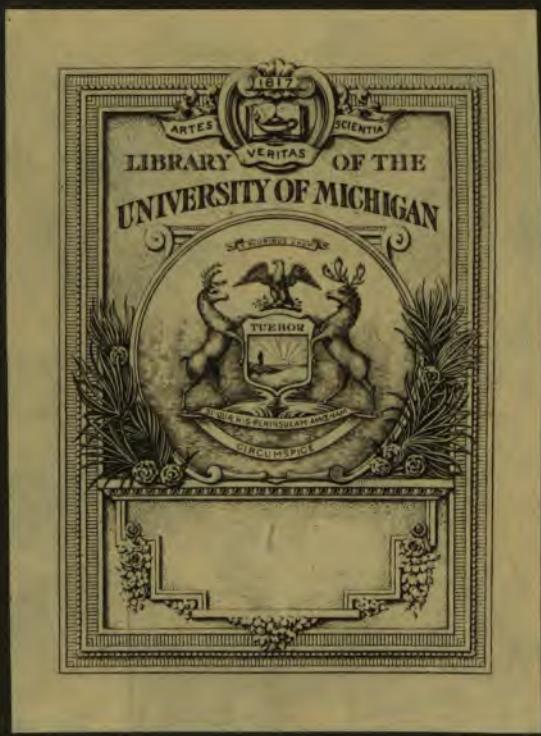
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# The John Crerar Library

A Free Public Reference Library  
of Scientific Literature

1894-1905

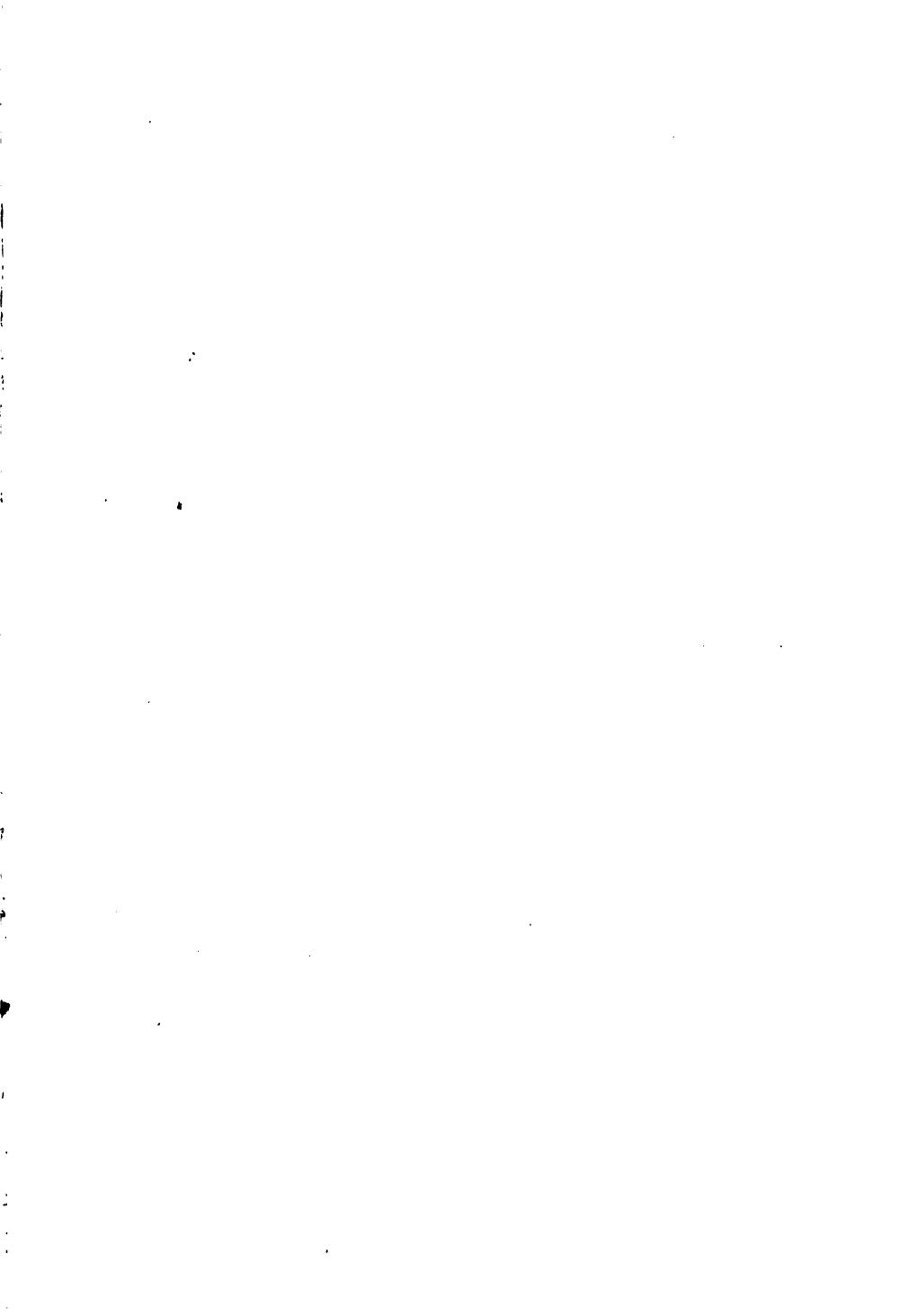
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CHICAGO

1905

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**JOHN CRERAR**

## THE JOHN CRERAR LIBRARY

**Foundation.**—The John Crerar Library, the latest established of the free public libraries of Chicago, owes its existence to the bequest of the late John Crerar.

Mr. Crerar, for many years a prominent citizen of Chicago, was of Scotch ancestry, the son of John and Agnes (Smeallie) Crerar. Born in New York in 1827, he was educated in the schools of that city, and entered into business there, becoming a member of the firm of Jessup, Kennedy & Co. Coming to Chicago in 1862, he established the firm of Crerar, Adams & Co., dealers in railroad supplies, and accumulated a large fortune. At the time of his death he was a director of the Pullman Palace Car Co., of the Chicago and Alton Railroad Co., of the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, and president of the Chicago and Joliet Railroad Co. He was a member and trustee of the Second Presbyterian Church, and gave liberally of his time and money to the work of his church. He was greatly interested in the charitable institutions of the city, being a director of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society and of the Presbyterian Hospital, and vice-president of the Chicago Orphan Asylum. All of these and many others were remembered liberally in his will. He was equally prominent socially, and was a member of the Chicago, Calumet, Union, Commercial, and Literary clubs.

Mr. Crerar died October 19, 1889. His will, dated August 5, 1886, was admitted to probate November 14, 1889, and its validity was finally established by a decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois, rendered June 19, 1893.

Specific bequests of more than \$600,000 were made to relatives and friends, and of nearly \$1,000,000 to charitable institutions and public purposes. The fiftieth section of the will disposed of the remainder of the estate in the following words:

Recognizing the fact that I have been a resident of Chicago since 1862, and that the greater part of my fortune has been accumulated here, and acknowledging with hearty gratitude the kindness that has always been extended to me by my many friends, and by my business and social acquaintances and associates, I give, devise, and bequeath all the rest, remainder, and residue of my estate, both real and personal, for the erection, creation, maintenance, and endowment of a free public library, to be called "The John Crerar Library," and to be located in the city of Chicago, Illinois, a preference being given to the South Division of the city, in as much as the Newberry Library will be located in the North Division. I direct that my executors and trustees cause an act of incorporation under the laws of Illinois, to be procured to carry out the purpose of this bequest; and I request that Norman Williams be made the first President thereof; and that, in addition to my executors and trustees, the following named friends of mine will act as the first Board of Directors in such corporation, and aid and assist my executors and trustees therein, namely: Marshall Field, E. W. Blatchford, T. B. Blackstone, Robert T. Lincoln, Henry W. Bishop, Edward G. Mason, Albert Keep, Edson Keith, Simon J. McPherson, John M. Clark, and George A. Armour, or their survivors. I desire the building to be tasteful, substantial, and fire-proof, and that a sufficient fund be reserved over and above the cost of its construction to provide, maintain, and support a library for all time. I desire the books and periodicals selected with a view to create and sustain a healthy moral and Christian sentiment in the community, and that all nastiness and immorality be excluded. I do not mean by this that there shall not be anything but hymn books and sermons, but I mean that dirty French novels and all skeptical trash and works of questionable moral tone shall never be found in this Library.

I want its atmosphere that of Christian refinement, and its aim and object the building up of character, and I rest content that the friends I have named will carry out my wishes in these particulars.

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The amount thus bequeathed was estimated at the time to be about \$2,500,000, but it was hoped that improvement in the business conditions of the country would materially increase this sum. These hopes have been realized, and the total endowment, on a most conservative estimate, is now \$3,400,000.

**Development.**—The administration of the estate in the Probate Court was closed July 13, 1894. Meanwhile the trustees of the estate had co-operated with the trustees of the Newberry estate in securing legislation which seemed needed for the better organization and administration of endowed libraries, embodied in "An act to encourage and promote the establishment of free public libraries," approved June 17, 1891. Under this act the John Crerar Library was incorporated on October 12, 1894, and duly organized January 12, 1895. All of the directors named by Mr. Crerar nine years before were living and present, and Norman Williams was elected the first president, as Mr. Crerar desired.

Mr. Williams gave much time and thought to the development of the Library, and retained the presidency until his death, in 1899. He was succeeded by Huntington W. Jackson, who, both as trustee of the estate and as chairman of the committee on administration, had already proved his interest in the Library, which was further manifested by a bequest of \$1,000, notable as the first bequest received by the institution other than the one by which it was founded. His death followed too soon, in January, 1901, and he was succeeded by Honorable Peter Stenger Grosscup. Other deaths and removals from the city have changed materially the constitution of the Board of Directors, which in April, 1905, consisted of the following gentlemen: Marshall Field, E.

W. Blatchford, Robert T. Lincoln, Henry W. Bishop, Albert Keep, John M. Clark, Frank S. Johnson, Peter Stenger Grosscup, Marvin Hughitt, Thomas D. Jones, John J. Mitchell, Leonard A. Busby, Robert Forsyth, and the mayor and comptroller of Chicago, *ex officiis*. The Treasurer, William J. Louderback, and the Librarian, Clement W. Andrews, were appointed in 1895, and have served to the present time.

The first act of the Directors, after organization, was to declare that the whole amount of the bequest was not too large for the sufficient fund which they were required to reserve in order to provide, maintain, and support the library for all time, and that therefore the endowment should not be encroached upon either for land, building, or books, but that a building fund should be accumulated from the income. This fund in January, 1905, amounted to nearly \$600,000.

**Scope.**—The second act of the Directors was to determine the character and scope of the Library. The trustees of the estate had prepared a list of the public libraries of the city, giving their character and size. The actual and prospective development of the Chicago Public Library as a great lending library, and of the Newberry Library as a great reference library in certain fields, largely influenced the trustees to suggest that the John Crerar Library be made a reference library, embracing such departments as were not fully occupied by any other existing library in Chicago, and that the number of departments be limited to such as the funds of the Library could render complete and unique.

After a careful consideration of the whole subject the directors unanimously decided to establish a free public reference library of scientific and technical literature. This decision seemed to them to accord with the particular busi-

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ness activities by which the greater part of Mr. Crerar's fortune had been accumulated, to exclude naturally certain questionable classes of books which his will distinctly prohibits, and to favor the aim and object which it expressly points out. As personal friends, who had been acquainted with his wise and generous purposes, and with his civic patriotism and gratitude, they believed that he would surely have wished his gift to supplement, in the most effective way, the existing and prospective library collections of Chicago, and to be of the greatest possible value to the whole city.

Accordingly, a series of conferences with the trustees of the Chicago Public Library and the Newberry Library was held, and an elastic scheme for the division of the field was adopted. The special field of the John Crerar Library may be defined as that of the natural, physical, and social sciences, and their applications.

The administration of the Library is not organized into departments, nor is there any difference of treatment of the various subjects, but for convenience in dealing with appropriations, statistics, etc., the books are divided in five classes, General Works, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Applied Sciences. The last named class includes the applied fine arts, but not music, sculpture, or painting. With four exceptions, theology, philology, law, and medicine, all the subjects comprehended by a broad interpretation of its field as already defined, are to be found in the Library. All these exceptions are well provided for in other libraries in the city, but the omission of medicine has always been regarded as anomalous, and has caused much otherwise unnecessary duplication. It is hoped that the erection of the permanent building will offer an oppor-

tunity of correcting this, and of making the valuable collection of the Newberry Library, by a more central location, even more useful to the medical profession.

While it is the purpose of the Directors to develop the Library as symmetrically as possible within these limits, they have not hesitated to take advantage of exceptional opportunities, and have made several purchases which make it notably strong in certain subjects. Unusual attention, also, has been given to the collection of files of scientific and technical periodicals, both American and foreign.

The years 1895 and 1896 were spent in the preliminary work of organization. A Librarian was appointed, a staff selected, and temporary quarters secured. The purchase of books was begun, and when, on April 1, 1897, the Library was opened to the public, without formalities, there were 15,000 volumes ready for use and 7,000 more in the hands of the cataloguers.

**Administration.**—The management of the Library is controlled by a board of fifteen directors. Two, the mayor and comptroller of Chicago, are *ex officio* members, the others were appointed by Mr. Crerar or have been elected by the Board to fill vacancies, such elections being subject, by the act under which the Library is incorporated, to the approval of the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois. The Directors hold quarterly meetings and usually act only upon the recommendation of the standing committees, of which there are four — on Finance, Administration, Buildings and Grounds, and Books. The President and the Chairmen of these committees form an Executive Committee. A carefully considered succession to the powers of President and Chairman makes further provision for action in emergencies.

Besides the President, Vice-Presidents, and Secretary,

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who must be members of the Board, the Directors elect a Treasurer and a Librarian, who may or may not be members. They are the executive officers of the corporation, and are entirely independent of each other. The Treasurer, under the supervision of the Committee on Finance, has charge of the receipts and payments of the Library and the investment of its funds. The Librarian, under the supervision of the Committee on Administration, has charge of the general management of the Library, and, under the supervision of the Committee on Books, of the selection and purchase of books. In the latter work he has the assistance of several of the staff, who systematically read and summarize book reviews. Suggestions from readers are welcomed and given careful consideration.

**Staff.**—The work of the Library is carried on by a staff of forty-three persons, consisting of a librarian, assistant librarian, cataloguer, reference librarian, classifier, assistant cataloguer, assistant reference librarian, six senior assistants, fifteen junior assistants, six attendants, four pages, janitor, assistant janitor, and three charwomen. Of the forty-three, twenty-one are women. Appointments are made by the Committee on Administration, subject to the approval of the Directors. All applications are referred to the Librarian, and the Committee act only upon report from him. On account of the peculiar demands of a scientific library, they will not consider applications for positions above the grade of attendant from persons not having a reading knowledge of French and German. The Committee also place great weight on library training and experience, so that nearly all the employees above the grade mentioned are graduates of library schools or have entered the service from other libraries. Of the attendants almost all in the evening ser-



vice have been students at one or another of the educational institutions of the city or vicinity.

**Rooms.**—Temporary quarters, pending the accumulation of a building fund and the erection of a permanent building, were obtained by leasing, in July, 1895, the sixth floor of the Marshall Field & Co. Building, No. 87 Wabash Avenue. In May, 1900, one half of the fifth floor was added, and in January, 1906, the rest of that floor will be occupied.

The Reading Room, furnished in dark oak, is on the sixth floor, and accommodates about one hundred readers. The Society Room is on the fifth floor, with separate entrance. It seats about fifty, and its use is granted by the Committee on Administration without charge to meetings for scientific and educational purposes, and can be secured for the stated meetings of societies. The Stack Rooms are on both floors, and have at present seats for about twenty readers engaged in special research, and shelf room for one hundred thousand volumes. The remainder of the collection has been placed temporarily in a room kindly offered by the Newberry Library. The Directors' Room, on the sixth floor, contains life-size portraits of Mr. Crerar and of the Duc d'Aumale by the late G. P. A. Healy. Besides these the suite contains several other rooms needed for the administration of the Library.

**Collections.**—On June 1, 1905, the Library had entered upon its books of record 134,194 volumes, and there were still unrecorded, from recent purchases, some 10,000 volumes and 20,000 pamphlets. It is a good working collection in most of the subjects within its scope, and, through certain special purchases, much more than this in some. The special purchases include about 8,000 volumes on science and technology, bought of the Newberry Library in 1896;





THE JOHN CREEAR LIBRARY READING ROOM



some 300 volumes on ornithology, bought of the same library in 1898; the private library of Professor R. T. Ely, consisting of 6,000 volumes and 4,000 pamphlets, mostly on American labor and social movements; the private library of Mr. C. V. Gerritsen of Amsterdam; and considerable purchases at auction of mathematical books from the libraries of Boncompagni and Bierens de Haan, and of zoölogical books from that of Milne-Edwards.

The Gerritsen collection is the largest and most important of these special purchases. It consists of some 18,000 volumes and 15,000 pamphlets on social and economic subjects, being especially full on finance, banking, labor, and socialism. It includes a distinct collection of nearly 6,000 volumes and pamphlets on the social, political, and legal status of woman.

Besides 2,000 current periodicals which are kept in the Periodical Alcove of the Reading Room, the Library receives 4,000 other continuations, such as annual reports and parts of books issued serially, which are placed on the regular shelves as soon as received.

In public documents the Library is rather stronger than might be expected, considering the short time it has been established. It is a "designated depository" of the Congressional Documents, a special depository of the publications of the United States Geological Survey, and a depository of all bills, resolves, and acts of Congress since 1901. Many state and some city documents have been acquired. Of foreign documents it has all the Parliamentary Papers of Great Britain since 1896, and many earlier ones on economic subjects; a nearly complete set of the Parliamentary Papers of Canada; a very full set of those of the Netherlands; an unusual collection of French documents of the fifteenth to-

the eighteenth centuries on economic subjects; and many serial official publications of Austria, France, and Germany.

**Catalogues.**—Much time and care are given to the development of the card catalogues, both public and official. Nearly 60 per cent of the titles are printed especially for the Library, and almost all the remainder are obtained from the Library of Congress. The public card catalogue is in three divisions: author, classed subject, and alphabetical subject index. The author catalogue is the usual one, containing besides the names of authors those of editors, translators, and the subjects of biographies, and also striking titles. The classed subject catalogue is the one most consulted and has been made as full as possible. It is arranged according to the Decimal Classification with few alterations but many expansions. Under each final subdivision the arrangement of the titles is chronological, the latest being put first. An unusual and important development has been made in that part of the classification treating of history and geography. Under each political unit (country, province or state, and town) are given the titles of all works dealing directly or chiefly with the place. These are subdivided systematically in accordance with the first three figures of the main classification. The result is not only that works on adjacent places are brought together, for example, Illinois next to Michigan; and works on part of a country immediately follow those on the whole country, for example, works on Chicago following those on Illinois; but also under each place related subjects are brought together, for example, 977.3 (570) Natural History of Illinois, 977.3 (581) Flora of Illinois, 977.3 (591) Fauna of Illinois. The alphabetical subject index is primarily an index to the classed catalogue, and no entries are made in it which would duplicate exactly

any collection in the latter, when a single reference gives all the titles, and no others, on a specific subject. On the other hand, entries are made under headings which collect material separated in the classed catalogue because of its relations to broader subjects and also under those which separate material collected in the classed catalogue. It is therefore an alphabetical subject catalogue of all material more conveniently consulted through such a catalogue.

This triple catalogue is supplemented by a card catalogue of serials, a printed list of current periodicals, printed lists of dictionaries and bibliographies, several card indexes on special subjects, a considerable collection of bibliographies, and an author catalogue of all books, so far as recatalogued, in the Library of Congress.

The public catalogue contains the titles of all books in the Library, and in addition the titles of articles in some 300 periodicals. Part of these latter are obtained by co-operation with four other American libraries, part from the Library of Congress, and part by the independent work of The John Crerar Library. So far as the selection has been made by the latter preference has been given to those containing long articles likely to be reprinted and referred to as independent works and to those with which a specialist is not so apt to be familiar because of their general character.

**Use.**—The Library is open to readers from 9 A.M. to 10 P.M. every day in the year, excepting Sundays, but including all holidays. A Cloak Room is provided where outer garments may be checked without charge, but its use is not insisted upon, except in wet weather and when the Reading Room is crowded. The Library, however, will not hold itself responsible for articles taken into the Reading Room or left in the Cloak Room over night.

In the Reading Room is shelved a collection of four thousand volumes, intended to include, besides general works of reference, the best books, both advanced and popular, on each important subject within the scope of the Library, and a selection of other works either especially interesting or much in demand. It is constantly revised and kept up to date. This collection may be consulted without formality, as also may the periodicals within the Periodical Alcove. Books may be drawn from the Stack, and periodicals from the Periodical Alcove, for use in the Reading Room, upon presentation of call slips properly filled out. A few books, on account of their character, may be consulted only upon registration and statement of satisfactory reasons, and some of great value or rarity only in the presence of an attendant.

As the Library is for reference use only, no book is allowed to leave the Library except for special reasons other than the convenience of the reader, and then only if it is one not likely to be called for. Such loans are for a short time and must be covered by a money deposit or satisfactory guarantee from another library. Persons making special researches may be admitted to the Stacks at the discretion of the Librarian upon registration with the Reference Librarian, and passes admitting without registration may be granted to those likely to make a prolonged use of the privilege if they are personally known to the Directors or the Librarian. The unauthorized removal, mutilation, or marking in any way of the property of the Library is absolutely prohibited. The officials are authorized to exclude any person of unseemly behavior or appearance, and any one who wilfully violates the regulations.

The use of the Library by the public has fully justified the decisions of the Directors as to its scope and character,

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Beginning with eighty, the average daily attendance has increased to 279 in 1904, in spite of the fact that the Library is so situated as to escape the notice of one seeking it, rather than to attract the attention of the passer-by. The recorded use, which does not include books from the shelves in the Reading Room, those read in the Stack Rooms, or periodicals read in the Periodical Alcove, has increased even more rapidly, and for 1904 was 75,000 volumes and periodicals. The total use is about three times that number.

**Publications.**—The Library issues, usually in May, an Annual Report covering the previous calendar year. Copies are sent free. The bibliographical publications are intended primarily for the readers, but it is hoped that as the size of the Library increases they may become of use to scholars and libraries elsewhere. They are not distributed gratuitously, but in exchange or upon receipt of a nominal price of about one-quarter the cost of paper and press work, and the postage if sent by mail. A price-list will be sent upon application.

**Permanent Building.**—In 1901 the Directors took up the question of a permanent site, and decided that the greatest usefulness of the Library could be secured only by a central location. They therefore appealed to the state legislature and to the city council for permission to erect a building on what is commonly known as the Lake Front. This permission was granted by the legislature in "An act to authorize The John Crerar Library to erect and maintain a free public library on Grant Park," approved March 29, 1901, and by the city council in an ordinance passed March 18, 1901. The act provided that the Library should procure the consent of such abutting property owners as might have



